DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 469 220 EA 031 997

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TITLE	Do Job Requirements and Work Conditions Interact with Individual Characteristics To Influence Teacher Attraction to the Principalship?
PUB DATE	2001-11-00
NOTE	12p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the University Council for Educational Administration (15th, Cincinnati, OH, November 2-4, 2001).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Administrator Role; Elementary Secondary Education; *Job Applicants; Job Development; Occupational Information; *Principals; Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Characteristics; *Teacher Promotion; *Work Environment

ABSTRACT

Policymakers have called for reinventing the principal's role because the long list of duties assigned to principals discourages potential applicants from applying for position vacancies. The focus of this study was to examine teachers' attraction to the principalship. Its purpose was to generate practical information that will inform efforts of policymakers engaged in reinventing the principal's role. A national sample of 239 randomly selected teachers rated position announcements for principal vacancies to generate data responsive to research questions. Results reveal that teacher reactions to the position announcements varied by gender and school size, with females and teachers employed in large schools being significantly less attracted to the job. Both males and females rated position announcements depicting a democratic leadership and a shorter work week more positively than they rated those depicting an authoritarian leadership style and a longer work week. It is recommended that organizational representatives wishing to increase the size of the applicant pool should both endorse the democratic approach to school administration and communicate this preference to prospective applicants. Women continue to represent a vast reservoir of untapped talent for leadership positions, begging the question of whether policymakers can reinvent the principalship in ways that appeal to women. (Contains 30 references and 2 tables.) (RT)

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Do Job Requirements and Work Conditions Interact with Individual Characteristics to Influence Teacher Attraction to the Principalship?

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Do Job Requirements and Work Conditions Interact with Individual Characteristics to Influence Teacher Attraction to the Principalship?

Professional organizations such the National Commission on Excellence in Education have called for reforms in the recruitment of school principals Education (A Nation at Risk: The Imperative of Educational Reform, 1989). Recruitment involves matching the individual and the organization to form an employment relationship (Heneman, Heneman & Judge, 1997). Implicit in this definition is the notion that, for recruitment efforts to be effective, both organizational representatives and job applicants must make affirmative decisions. For most of this century, researchers and organizational recruiters have focused exclusively on the activities and decisions made by organizational representatives.

The recent nationwide shortage of qualified applicants for principal vacancies compels community leaders to consider the work-related needs of prospective applicants. Student enrollments are climbing, building principals are retiring in record numbers, and classroom teachers are increasingly reluctant to fill the vacated positions (Barker, 1997; Doud & Keller, 1998; McAdams, 1998; Muse & Thomas, 1991). The convergence of these trends has created an applicant shortage so critical that nearly half of the superintendents nationwide report difficulty in filling position vacancies (Educational Research Service [ERS] and others, 1998). Policymakers have called for reinventing the principal's role because the long list of duties assigned to principals discourages potential applicants from applying for position vacancies.

Study Purpose

The primary focus of this study was to examine teacher attraction to the principalship. Because the number and quality of individuals attracted to the principalship is insufficient, policymakers are challenged reinvent the role in ways that will increase the size of the applicant pool. The purpose of this research is to generate practical information that will inform the efforts of policymakers engaged in reinventing the principal's role. To achieve this purpose, we examined teacher reactions to two fundamental changes in the role that may influence teacher attraction for the position. The first fundamental change involves the emerging conceptualizations of leadership. During the industrial age, many principals used authoritative administrative processes and procedures to maintain organizational stability and supervise the work of others (Cuban, 1988). This approach to school administration is being replaced with conceptualizations of leadership (e.g., instructional, transformational, moral, participative, contingency) deemed to be effective in an era of high change (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). In other words, today's principals are expected to use democratic processes in working with teachers and community members to effect school improvement (Murphy & Shipman, 1999). A second fundamental change in the role is that today's principals, particularly secondary principals, devote significantly more hours to the job per week. We hypothesized that these changes may influence teacher attraction to the job and that teacher reaction to these changes may be subject to their personal, family, and career related characteristics.

We designed the study to respond to three research questions. Does a specified leadership style influence teacher attraction to the principalship? Does the time required to fulfill the role influence teacher attraction to the principalship? Are teacher reactions to features of principalship subject to individual differences among the teachers? To generate data responsive to the research questions, a national sample of 239 randomly selected teachers rated position announcements for a principal vacancy. We then assessed the influence of teacher characteristics, leadership style, and the time need to fulfill the job responsibilities on teacher ratings of the job. In the following sections we provide theoretical justification for assuming that

job attributes influence job attraction and review literature supporting the choice of independent variables. After reporting the findings, we discuss the practical implications of the findings for policy makers seeking to reinvent the principalship and provide direction for further research.

Theoretical Framework and Related Literature

A job attraction model formulated by private sector researchers (Rynes & Barber, 1990) informed the design of this research. This theoretical perspective postulates that, because job attributes are the most salient factors influencing applicant attraction for a position vacancy, employers faced with a critical shortage of qualified applicants should modify the attributes or features of the position to enhance applicant attraction and increase the size of the applicant pool. However, determining which job features enhance teacher attraction has proven to problematic because their reactions to such alterations appear to be subject to individual differences. For example, teacher attraction to and willingness to pursue teaching vacancies appears to vary by gender with males rating the extrinsic or economic job attributes of teaching more favorably and females rating the intrinsic job attributes of teaching more favorably (Winter, 1996). Also, more experienced teachers tend to rate descriptions of teaching positions less positively than less experienced teachers (Young, Rinehart, & Heneman, 1993). This study contributes to this stream of educational recruitment literature by examining whether fundamental changes in the principal's role and in the conditions of the workplace influence teacher reactions to the principalship and whether teacher reactions to these changes are subject to individual differences among the teachers. The following sections discuss the fundamental changes in more detail.

Job Requirements: Time Devoted to the Job

The Educational Research Service (1998) conducted a survey to identify factors that diminish applicant attraction for principalship. Across all types of communities and levels of K-12 schooling, "too much time" devoted to the job was among the top-ranked barriers for seeking a position vacancy. Today's principals work longer hours because, compared to their predecessors, they spend more time completing paperwork, supervising after-school activities, marketing their schools, becoming politically involved to generate financial support, and working with social service agencies (Doud & Keller, 1998). Consequently, the typical elementary school principal now works at least 50 hours per week and the typical high school principal works as much as 60-80 hours per week (Doud & Keller, 1998; Read, 2000; Yerkes & Guaglianone, 1998). National surveys and empirical studies reveal that the lengthened workweek compromises the ability of principals to achieve a balance between their family and work life and reduces applicant attraction for the job. More recently, Pounder and Merrill (2001) found that the time devoted to the job (i.e., working evenings and weekends) represented an unattractive feature of secondary principalship for potential applicants.

Work Conditions: Authoritative or Democratic Leadership?

Teacher reactions to a specified leadership style may vary by gender with males being more likely to view the principal ship from a managerial-industrial perspective and women being more likely to view the principal ship from an instructional leadership perspective. Such gender-specific preferences can be traced to the early decades of the twentieth century when male principals, drawing on their experiences in business and in the military, used an authoritarian approach to supervise the work of female teachers. Females, on the other hand, joined organizations such as the national Congress of Mothers where they learned to use democratic styles leadership (Bursting, 1980). Gender specific preferences for an administrative style do not appear to be unique to the field of educational administration. A meta-analysis in the field of administration and management (Eagley & Johnson, 1990) detected strong evidence that male

administrators tend to adopt a more autocratic leadership style and female administrators tend to adopt a more democratic leadership style. Some educational theorists maintain that the directive and authoritative leadership style associated with the bureaucratic model of school administration accommodates a male stereotype and runs counter to the way women lead. From a recruitment perspective, whether a specified leadership style appeals to one gender more than another matters because, compared to their numbers in education, women continue to be underrepresented in administrative positions by 19% at the elementary level and 31% at the secondary level (Shakeshaft, 1999).

Recent studies hint that male and female preferences for a specified leadership style (authoritative vs. democratic) and preferences for specified administrator behaviors (organizational management vs. instructional leadership) might be shifting. For example, Mertz and McNeely (1997) found that the decision making approach used by male and female educational administrators in response to hypothetical scenarios were more alike than different. Furthermore, recent recruitment studies (Winter & Dunaway, 1997; Winter, McCabe & Newton, 1998) suggest that, when job assignment level is held constant, there is no significant difference in male and female preferences for engaging in either school management or instructional leadership. In the first study (Winter & Dunaway, 1997) teachers at the high school level rate position announcements emphasizing management job attributes more favorably whereas elementary and middle school teachers rated position announcements emphasizing instructional leadership job attributes more favorably. Teachers who participated in the second study (Winter, et al., 1998) responded similarly when evaluating administrative applicants preferring to engage in either school management (coordinating school activities) or instructional leadership (monitoring student learning outcomes and creating a climate for instruction). High school teachers rated applicants preferring to engage in school management more positively whereas elementary and middle school teachers rated applicants preferring to engage in instructional leadership more positively.

Method

For this research, we blended the correlation and experimental research designs prevalent in the recruitment literature. The correlational design (e.g., Young & Heneman, 1986) casts independent variables in a multiple regression equation with participant ratings of the position serving as the dependent variable. The experimental design (e.g.,Young et al., 1993) frequently uses an analysis of variance procedure to assess the influence of independent variables likely to influence applicant attraction for a position (dependent variable).

A national sample of randomly selected public school teachers were randomly assigned to one of six treatment conditions. The participating teachers provided information about individual characteristics and evaluated a formal announcement of a principal vacancy depicting a specified leadership style and number of hours worked per week. To analyze the data, we cast teacher characteristics (personal, family-related, career related); leadership style (authoritative, democratic); and hours worked per week (45 hours, 55 hours, 65 hours) as independent variables in a multiple regression equation with teacher attraction to principalship serving as the dependent variable.

Sampling Procedure/Study Participants

We mailed the study instruments to a national sample of male (n = 300) and female (n = 300) public school teachers acquired from Market Data Retrieval. Two weeks after the initial contact, we mailed a postcard encouraging the non-participants to return the completed

instruments. Three weeks later, we mailed replacement instruments to all non-respondents. This process yielded 239 useable instruments representing a 40% response rate.

In terms of gender, there were more female participants (n = 126) than male participants (n = 112). Most (66%) reported that they live in two-wage earner homes and have no dependent children (51%). The participants were employed in elementary schools (n = 104), middle schools (n = 63), high schools (n = 65), and in other roles (n = 5). The teachers reported their school size as follows: (1) 0 - 150 students (3%), (2) 150 - 499 students (31%), (3) 500 - 749 students (24%), and (4) 750 or more students (42%).

Independent Variables

The independent variables were teacher characteristics, administrative model, and time requirements. Teachers used a demographic data form to identify their personal/family characteristics (gender, number of wage earners in the home, number of dependent children) and career-related characteristics (school level, school size). The other two independent variables were experimentally manipulated factors (leadership style, time requirements) depicting the desired behaviors of the successful applicant.

We used a multi-step process recommended by Anastasi and Urbina (1997) to establish content validity for the leadership styles manipulated in the position announcements. From the literature we identified two distinct models of school administration (authoritative, democratic). The definitions of these models are as follows. Principals who adopt the traditional or authoritative model of school administration function as organizational bureaucrats and scientifically-trained managers who value efficiency, focus on technical and clerical issues, carry out the wishes of individuals above them in the organizational hierarchy, and assure that teachers comply with the prescribed curriculum (Cuban, 1988). Principals who adopt the emerging or democratic model of school administration value learning, initiate change, reconstruct conceptions of authority and school structure, invent ways to make schools fit children, and invest heavily in establishing purposes (Murphy & Shipman, 1999).

We provided a panel of professors of educational leadership (N = 5) with a cross-impact matrix, definitions of the two models of administration, and 71 discrete leadership behaviors derived from the literature. The panelists categorized the 71 discrete leadership behaviors as representative of either the authoritarian or democratic model of school administration. We retained the statements that panel members categorized unanimously for use in the announcements of a principal vacancy.

The panelists agreed that authoritarian principals exercise control over all school procedures and processes, spend the majority of the workweek engaged in school activities related to the day-to-day planning, coordination, control, and overall operation of the school, closely supervise the teachers, and issue direct orders when needed.

The panelists agreed that democratic principals empower teachers to become involved in school affairs, develop, articulate, implement and exercise stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community, lead in reflective and self-critical processes and assure that teachers assist in constructing knowledge, and engage teachers and community members in decision making.

Dependent Variable

Because job applicants form subjective probabilities about the job (Heneman, Schwab, Fossum & Dyer, 1983; Schwab, Rynes & Aldag, 1987), most recruitment researchers require participants to indicate the probability of receiving and accepting a job offer. The additive composite score of the assessed probabilities represent applicant attraction toward an

employment opportunity. For this study, the composite score of the participant responses to four questions represented a measure of overall job attraction: (1) "How would you rate the overall attractiveness of the description of the principal vacancy?" (2) "How likely would you be to apply for the principal job described?" (3) "How likely would you be to accept an interview for the principal as described?" and, (4) "How likely would you be to accept the job of principal as described?" The participants recorded their responses on 5-point Likert-type scales with 5 representing a more favorable rating.

Manipulation of the two levels of administrative style and three levels of hours worked per week yielded six versions of an announcement of a principal vacancy. Each version, identical in length and format, contained general information held constant across all versions, behaviors characteristic of a specified administrative model (either authoritarian or democratic), and a required time requirement (either 45 hours per week, 55 hours per week, or 65 hours per week). We conducted a pilot study with experienced teachers ($N = 31$) to determine whether the participants perceived the manipulations as intended and to assess the reliability of the dependent variable. We retained the piloted instruments for use in our study because nearly all of the participants (93%) accurately perceived the manipulations and the coefficient alpha for the four-item measure of job attractiveness (.91) was above the minimum recommended for use in social science research (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

We used the forward method to enter groups of variables into the regression equation in the order most likely to be of importance to the teacher. First, we entered personal variables (gender, wage earners in the home, dependent children). Next, we entered variables resulting from the career decisions of the participating teachers (school level, school size). Finally, we entered variables unique to the principal vacancy to be evaluated (administrative model, hours worked per week.

Results

The correlation coefficients (Pearson r) contained in Table I assisted in understanding the relationships among the major study variables. The bivariate correlations provide preliminary indication that three variables of interest (gender, leadership style, and hours worked per week) correlated significantly with the dependent variable. Note that, although principals report that balancing home responsibilities and administrative responsibilities is difficult, the correlation procedure revealed no significant relationship between proxy measures of the teacher's home responsibilities (number of wage earners in the home, number of dependent children) and teacher ratings of the position announcements. The results of a multiple regression analysis (see Table 2) provided a more precise assessment of teacher attraction to the principalship.

Insert Table I about here

The results of a multiple regression analysis indicated that four independent variables accounted for 13% of the variance in teacher attraction for the job as depicted in the position announcement. First, teacher reactions varied by gender with males rating the position announcements significantly more positively than females ($p < 0.00$). Also, school size had a significant negative impact on teacher ratings ($p < 0.05$) with attraction for the job decreasing as the size of the school increased. Both males and females rated the position announcements emphasizing the emerging or collaborative leadership style more positively than they rated the

traditional or hierarchical administrative model ($p < 0.05$). Finally, as anticipated, ratings of the job significantly decreased as the hours required per week increased ($p < 0.00$).

Insert Table 2 about here

Discussion

As noted previously, determining which features of a job will appeal to prospective applicants poses a challenge for organizational recruiters because applicant reactions may be subject to individual differences. Our results revealed that teacher reactions to the position announcements varied by gender and school size with females and teachers employed in large schools being significantly less attracted to the job. The less positive rating of the position announcement by females was somewhat surprising because we manipulated two variables (leadership style, time requirements) purported to diminish female attraction to principalship. However, the less positive ratings by teachers employed in large schools are generally consistent with previous research indicating that the long hours worked by principals diminish applicant attraction (ERS & others, 1998; Pounder & Merrill, 2001).

Both males and females rated position announcements depicting a democratic leadership and a shorter workweek more positively than position announcements depicting an authoritarian leadership style and a longer workweek. In other words, it appears that teacher preferences for a collaborative work environment and a work schedule compatible with family life transcend gender. This finding is consistent with the views of private sector recruitment researchers (Barber &Daly, 1996) who speculate that reductions in sex role differentiation, gender discrimination, and occupational segregation in the past decade may have reduced differences in the leadership styles of males and females. These reductions changes, coupled with a more equal distribution of home responsibilities between men and women, may have mitigated the gender-specific reactions to these features of principalship addressed in this study

Our findings also inform the current efforts of policymakers to reinvent the principal's role. In this study, teacher attraction for principalship decreased as both the time commitment and school size increased. Thus, to increase the size of the applicant pool, community leaders would do well to retool principalship in ways that will reduce the length of the workweek particularly in larger schools. In addition, our findings have practical implications for the content of recruitment materials advertising principal vacancies. Both males and females rated position announcements depicting the democratic or collaborative leadership style more positively than the directive or authoritative leadership style. Although the democratic approaches to school administration have gained wide acceptance, we cannot assume that such approaches represent common practice. Therefore, organizational representatives wishing to increase the size of the applicant pool should both endorse the democratic approach to school administration and, consistent with the recommendations of Pounder and Young (1994), communicate this preference to prospective applicants.

Based on our findings, it would be difficult to argue that endorsing and publishing recruitment messages depicting a democratic leadership style or reducing the length of the workweek will increase the number of females willing to apply. Compared to the numbers in education, women continue to represent a vast reservoir of untapped talent for positions of

leadership. The research challenge remains. Can policy makers reinvent principalship in ways that appeal to women?

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Table 1
Correlation Matrix

Variable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
01 DV	00							
02 Gender	21**	00						
03 Wage Earners	06	-01	00					
04 Dependents	12	06	14*	00				
05 Sch. Level	11	32**	-05	-03	00			
06 Sch. Size	-11	12	-02	01	46**	00		
07 Admin. Model	-14*	09	00	02	04	02	00	
08 Hrs. Per Week	-19**	03	-10	-07	-01	-01	02	00

Note. Correlation coefficients are reported without decimal points.
N = 239
** $p < 0.01$
* $p < 0.05$

Table 2
Forward Regression of Teacher Job Rating on the Predictor Variables

Predictor Variables	Beta Coefficient	t Value
01 Gender	2.187	4.005**
02 Number of Wage Earners	0.038	0.616
03 Number of Dep. Children	0.100	1.640
05 School Level	0.139	1.939
06 School Size	-0.686	-2.255**
07 Administrative Model	-1.398	-2.537**
08 Hours Worked Per week	-0.107	-3.234**

R-Square = 0.128 [$F(7, 231) = 0.128$, $p < 0.01$]
N = 239
** $p < 0.01$

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